

REMARKS

The specification has been amended to add the section CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS. In particular, the specification has been amended to indicate that the subject application is a continuation-in-part of co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/006,657, filed January 13, 1998, now U.S. Patent 6,363,380.

Applicants submit that this is permissible in that the subject application was co-pending with the above application, and in that the inventor of the above application, Nevenka Dimitrova, is a co-inventor of the subject application.

The claims have been amended to more clearly define the invention as disclosed in the written description. In particular, the claims have been amended for clarity.

Applicants believe that the above changes answer the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 2, rejection of the claims, and respectfully request withdrawal thereof.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-10, 13-17, 27-34, 37 and 39 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,363,380 to Dimitrova. The Examiner has further rejected claims 11, 12, 38 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dimitrova in view of U.S. Patent 6,137,544 to Dimitrova et al. In addition, the Examiner has rejected claims 18-22 and 24-26 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dimitrova in view of U.S.

Patent 6,161,107 to Stern. The Examiner has also rejected claim 23 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dimitrova in view of Stern, and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,337,683 to Gilbert. Finally, the Examiner has rejected claims 35 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dimitrova in view of Gilbert.

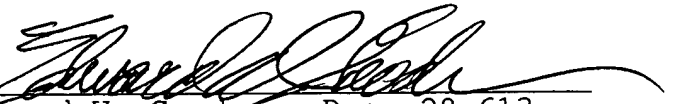
Applicants submit that the Dimitrova patent is an improper reference in that, as noted above, the subject application has been made a continuation-in-part of the application which issued as the Dimitrova patent.

In view of the above, Applicants believe that the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 102(e) and 103(a) rejections of the claims have been overcome.

Applicants believe that this application, containing claims 1-40, is now in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

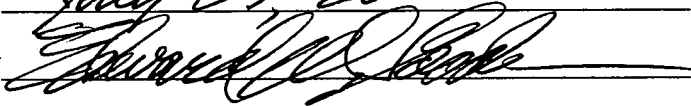


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